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Identical letters dated 6 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The Syrian Government is committed to the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law. It is prepared to engage in earnest with positive international initiatives that are consistent with the interests of the Syrian people, particularly with a view to bringing an end to the bloodshed throughout Syria and protecting the lives of Syrian citizens. Syria has stated that it is pleased with the provisions of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018), and especially with the positive trends that can be seen in the resolution.

The Syrian Arab Republic particularly welcomes fact that, in accordance with the principles of the Charter, the resolution includes a strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. Syria welcomes the call for a humanitarian pause on all Syrian territory to enable the sustained, safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid in accordance with international law. Syria takes a positive view of the provision stating that the cessation of hostilities shall not apply to military operations against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh), Al-Qaida the Nusrah Front and other terrorist groups, as designated by the Security Council.

The Syrian armed forces that are carrying out military operations to eliminate terrorists in the eastern Ghutah are fulfilling their counter-terrorism mission, which is both a right and a duty. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that, in accordance with international humanitarian law, its forces have taken all of the necessary measures to protect civilians. For that purpose, only a few hours after the adoption of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018), they enacted a daily five-hour ceasefire and established a safe humanitarian corridor to protect the residents and allow civilians to depart securely from the areas where terrorists are present. They have offered the civilians accommodation and health care.

On 1 March 2018, the Syrian Government facilitated access for a humanitarian assistance convoy to the Syrian city of Afrin. The Western States have been ignoring the ongoing barbaric Turkish attack on the city and its surrounding villages. The attack has claimed numerous lives, particularly of women and children. It has destroyed property, displaced civilians and caused a severe shortfall in humanitarian necessities, especially food and medicine. On 5 March, the Syrian Government facilitated access to the eastern Ghutah for a humanitarian assistance convoy comprising 46 trucks laden with various essential items. It is currently making preparations to enable another assistance convoy to enter the region. The terrorists

and armed groups in the eastern Ghutah showed their true criminal nature by bombarding the convoy while it was returning to Damascus.

Every day, Syrian Arab Army helicopters have been dropping leaflets on the villages and towns of the eastern Ghutah in order to ensure that civilians who wish to leave areas where terrorists are deployed know how they can reach the safe corridor for civilian evacuation. However, over the last eight days, the armed terrorist groups have continued to bombard the humanitarian corridor established by the Syrian State, using force of arms to prevent civilians from reaching the corridor. This criminal behaviour has been ignored and abetted by those States that sponsor the terrorist groups in the eastern Ghutah.

The terrorist organizations and their sponsors in Washington, London, Riyadh and Ankara have shown contempt for civilian lives and the principles of international law. That much is hardly surprising. It is, however, deplorable that the United States, France and Britain, which pressed for the adoption of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018), have not issued a single statement condemning the armed groups' violations of the resolution and their attacks on the city of Damascus and the surrounding areas, which have killed and injured hundreds of innocent civilians. Instead, those States have launched a media campaign of disinformation, lies and rumours regarding the purported use of chemical weapons.

The behaviour of those States that clamoured for the adoption of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018), not to mention the statements that followed its adoption, show that their true purpose was not to reach a genuine truce, or even to protect civilians and fulfil their needs, but rather to use the United Nations as a means to hamper the progress made by the Syrian Arab Army and its allies in deterring and confronting the terrorist groups.

In bringing these facts to the attention of the Secretary-General and the Security Council, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic wishes to urge them to fulfil their responsibility by pressing those States that support and sponsor the terrorist groups in the eastern Ghutah to comply with the provisions of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018). Those States must rein in the groups that have been bombarding residential areas, civilian institutions and medical facilities and caused numerous civilian casualties, most of them women and children. Most recently, on Monday 5 March 2018, the groups bombarded a number of medical facilities in Damascus and Rif Dimashq, namely the Tishrin, Biruni and Avicenna hospitals. On a previous occasion, they bombarded the surgical hospital. Those attacks have killed or injured a number of patients and caused significant material damage to the facilities.

Nevertheless, disinformation and double standards have failed to distract public opinion from the basic facts at hand. The States that sponsor the armed terrorist groups must desist from that course of action in order to stop the downward spiral that is under way the region and the world.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative